

Thomas Jefferson to Thomas McKean, February 2, 1801 , from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

TO THOMAS M'KEAN J. MSS.

Washington, Feb. 2, 1801

Dear Sir, —I have long waited for an opportunity to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of Dec 15, as well as that by Doctr. Mendenhall. None occurring, I shall either deliver the present to Genl Muhlenburg or put it under cover to Doctr Wistar, to whom I happen to be writing, to be sent to your house in Philadelphia, or forwarded confidentially to Lancaster. The event of the election is still *in dubio*. A strong portion in the House of Representatives will prevent an election if they can. I rather believe they will not be able to do it, as there are six individuals of moderate character, any one of whom coming over to the republican vote will make a ninth State. Till this is known, it is too soon for me to say what should be done in such atrocious cases as those you mention of federal officers obstructing the operation of the State governments. One thing I will say, that as to the future, interferences with elections, whether of the State or General Government, by officers of the latter, should be deemed cause of removal; because the constitutional remedy by the elective principle becomes nothing, if it may be smothered by the enormous patronage of the General govmet. How far it may be practicable, prudent or proper, to look back, is too great a question to be decided but by the united wisdom of the whole administration when formed. Our situation is so different from yours, that it may render proper some differences in the practice. Your State is a single body, the majority clearly one way. Ours is of sixteen integral parts, some of them all one way, some all the other, some divided. Whatever may

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be decided as to the past, they shall give no trouble to the State governments in future, if it shall depend on me; and be assured, particularly as to yourself, that I should consider the most perfect harmony & interchange of accommodations & good offices with those governments as among the first objects.